THING STREET SURVIVOR BULLETIN. It wasn't the sort of uplift she liked to publish. She'd probably try to kick him off her mailing list. Then when she discovered he wasn't even on it, she'd escalate and start acting out. She'd tear that new party dress Citizen Hearse got her. They'd be short beds, so she'd be put in restraints and shipped to THE CLINIC.

Trixie'd be in Reception. She'd say IT WAS HER....

SHE DID IT TO HERSELF....

*****

Porko requested his presence in the airing court. A sun-burnt stump lot, under rusting fire-escapes....

He wanted to make AN ANNOUNCEMENT....

Johnny heard heavy garbage bags rustle and bounce against the fire-escape before they finally struck the hard ground of the alley, with a dull thud. They contained the mortal remains and waste of what he smelled in the hall when he went out in the morning and came back at night. It was mainly cans and cardboard boxes, and the occasional carcass of a chicken wrapped in plastic like the entrails of a mummy, or a mummy baby.

Vagrants stumbled over them all night, and swore.

Natasha was the principal suspect. Her room was directly above the pile and, with her bulk and infirmity, she had a motive for not taking her garbage downstairs and depositing it in one of the pales that Porko emptied once a week.

Porko refused to remove the bags. They exploded, and the plastic stuck to the ground like skin. They'd be there next spring.....

The pails were lined up neatly against the fence.

He knew the ones with lids were empty. The garbage was piled high beside them in yellow No Frillies grocery bags. Porko stuffed them into the green ones he put on the curb.

The pails without lids were full. In the winter residents wouldn't even be bothered to clean off the snow, to remove the lids and put their garbage inside.

To judge by the weathered sign nailed into the brick wall, warning drivers that unauthorized vehicles would be towed, it had been the parking lot. Old Natasha brought her dog back there to shit. A decrepit German shepherd. Citizen Hearse periodically ordered her to clean it up with the snow shovel. A plastic one that he'd found at Funnyside last summer.

After the dog collapsed and died one morning, a rumor grew that she'd buried it back there with the same shovel. Things, too....

Porko sprawled on one of two cheap folding chairs behind an ugly green coffee table that he'd put out because there wasn't any room in his apartment. His was the super's suite, the show-piece, which in Emile Durkheim House was still too small.

The tenants were listening, their windows lit up along their fire escapes like Christmas lights. Porko invited him to sit.

What was wrong?

The kids, he revealed. Herman, Little Joe, and Eva. They ignored him at the Zombie